MAXIMS AND CONSIDERATIONS OF CHAMFORT

Translated, with an Introduction,
by
E. POWYS MATHERS

VOL. II.

THE GOLDEN COCKEREL PRESS
MCMXXVI.

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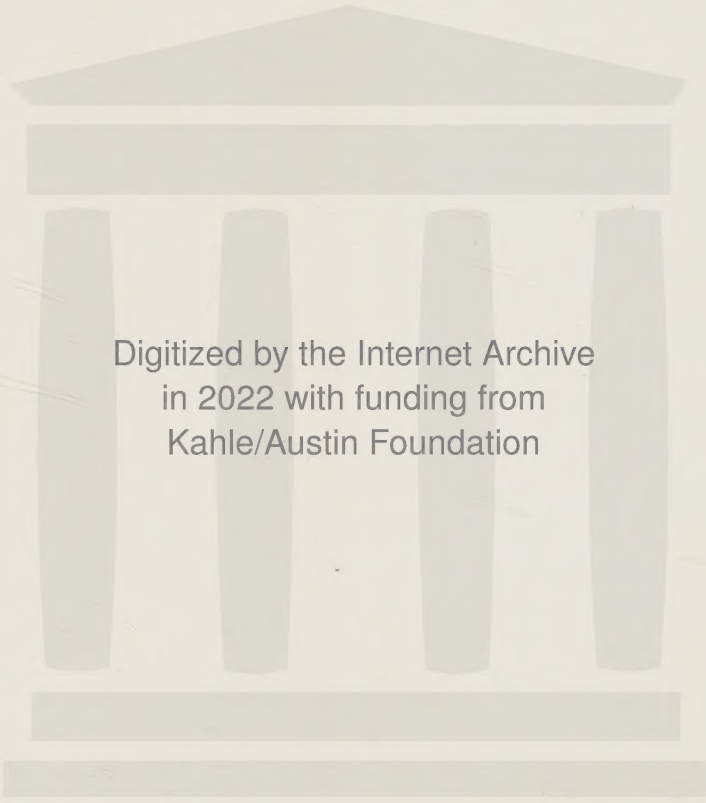
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CHAPTER V.

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MORAL CONSIDERATIONS

CCXCII. PHILOSOPHERS RECOGNISE these four principle virtues, from which they derive all others: justice, temperance, courage, and prudence. The last may be said to comprehend the two first, justice and temperance, and to do duty, in some sort, for the third, by sparing the man who has the misfortune to be deficient in courage many of the occasions on which this quality is needed.

CCXCIII. MORALISTS and Philosophers, in building up Physical & Metaphysical systems, have multiplied their maxims excessively and made them too general. What becomes, for example, of the saying of Tatius: *Neque mulier, amissa pudicitia, alia abnerit*, when we consider the example of those many women in whom a single frailty has not prevented the practice of several virtues? I myself have observed Mme. de L . . . , whose youth differed but little from that of Manon Lescaut, conceive a passion in her maturity, worthy of Heloïse. But these examples hold a conclusion dangerous to adduce in print, & it is only to prevent ourselves being gulled by the quackery of Moralists that we need to note them.

CCXCIV. SOCIETY has banished from evil living all that might shock good taste. This reformation is only ten years old.

CCXCV. WHEN the soul is sick she acts in exactly

the same fashion as the body, restlessly tossing until at last she finds a certain peace. In the end she settles on that system of feelings and ideas most necessary to her repose.

CCXCVI. THERE are some people to whom illusions are as necessary, in all that concerns them, as their life itself. If sometimes they show glimmerings of observation which make us think they are nearing the truth, they straightway sheer off again, like children who run after a masquerade and then take flight as soon as it turns back.

CCXCVII. OUR gratitude to most benefactors is the same as our feeling for dentists who have pulled our teeth. We acknowledge the good they have done and the evil from which they have delivered us, but we remember the pain they have occasioned and do not love them very much.

CCXCVIII. A FASTIDIOUS benefactor should reflect that there is a material side to his service, of which the beneficiary should be spared all thought. The idea of it must, as it were, be wrapped and hidden away in the sentiment which has prompted the benefit, just as with lovers the thought of the physical act is draped and ennobled in the magic of the love which leads to it.

CCXCIX. EACH benefit received is either near to

the heart or else entirely odious; a reliquary or dead man's bone, fit to enshrine . . . or trample under foot.

CCC. MOST professedly anonymous benefactors take flight, after their good deed, rather in the style of Virgil's Galatea: *Et se cupit ante videri.*

CCCI. WE are commonly supposed to bind folk to ourselves by being good to them. This is a kindness of Nature, for it is just that love should be the recompense of service . . .

CCCII. SCANDAL is an importunate wasp, against which we must make no movement unless we are quite sure that we can kill it; otherwise it will return to the attack more furious than ever.

CCCIII. THE new friends we make after a certain age, in the hope of replacing old friends who are lost, are to those same old friends as glass eyes and false teeth and wooden legs to natural eyes and teeth, and legs of flesh and bone.

CCCIV. THERE is sometimes a very pleasant philosophy to be discovered in the innocencies of a well-born child.

CCCV. MOST friendships so bristle with *ifs* and *buts*, that they come very near to mere acquaintanceship, dependent on *understandings*.

CCCVI. OUR customs & the customs of antiquity have as much in common as Aristides, Superintendent General of Athens, and the Abbé Terray.

CCCVII. EVIL by nature, mankind has become much more so through Society, whose every member contributes the defects, first of humanity, then of the individual, and lastly of the social order to which he belongs. These shortcomings grow more pronounced with time, so that a man, offended by them in others, as his age advances, and made unhappy by their presence in himself, conceives a contempt for both Mankind & Society, and has to direct it against one or other.

CCCVIII. IT is with happiness as with watches. The least complicated watch goes the least wrong, and the repeater is the most subject to variation. Should it also mark the minutes the likelihood of its breaking down is greater, and a watch which sets out to indicate the day of the week and the month of the year is all the more liable to go wrong.

CCCIX. MAN'S joys and griefs are equally in vain, but a gold or azure soap-bubble is better than a black or grey one.

CCCX. A MAN who masks tyranny, patronage, or even charity behind the likeness and title of friend-

ship, reminds me of that infamous priest who did his poisoning with holy wafers.

CCCXI. THERE are few benefactors who do not say with Satan: *Si cadens adoraveris me.*

CCCXII. POVERTY marks down the price of crime.

CCCXIII. STOICS are a sort of inspired persons who carry poetic exaltation and enthusiasm into the sphere of morals.

CCCXIV. IF it were possible for a man to lack intelligence himself and yet have the power to recognise grace, subtlety, comprehension, and every mental quality in another, and to show that he did so, his society, though unproductive, would be eagerly cultivated. Postulate the same of spiritual qualities and a like result obtains.

CCCXV. WHEN we see or experience the pains inseparable from extreme feeling either in love or friendship, from the death of one we adore or from life's accidents, we are tempted to believe that dissipation and frivolity are not great follies after all, and that the world is worth little more than the use to which worldly people put it.

CCCXVI. IN certain passionate friendships we

have all of passion's delight and the approbation of reason into the bargain.

CCCXVII. DEEP and delicate friendships have often been wounded by a crumpled rose.

CCCXVIII. GENEROSITY is only the compassion of a lofty soul.

CCCXIX. TO enjoy yourself and make others enjoy themselves, without harming yourself or any other; that, to my mind, is the whole of ethics.

CCCXX. AS far as they regard genuinely honest people of fixed principles, the Commandments of God have been written in little on the face of the Abbey of Thélème: *Do what you will.*

CCCXXI. EDUCATION should rest on the dual support of moral philosophy and prudence, moral philosophy as the stay of virtue, and prudence as a shield against the vice in others. If you tip the scale on the moral side you will produce none but dupes and martyrs, and by tilting it in the other direction you will develop a quality of selfish calculation only. Justice to oneself and to others is the first principle of all Society; and if we should love our neighbour as ourself, it is quite as just that we should love ourself as much as our neighbour.

CCCXXII. PERFECT friendship alone can develop the full qualities of soul and mind in certain people; ordinary intercourse unfolds a few pleasing qualities in them, that is all. They are fine fruit-trees which only reach maturity in the sunshine, and in a hothouse bring forth nothing but pleasant and useless foliage.

CCCXXIII. WHEN I was young and subject to the urge of my passions, which enticed me into society and drove me to seek in pleasure and among my fellows some diversion from the cruel discomforts to which I was a prey, the delights of seclusion and hard work were preached at me, and I was wearied to death by pedantic sermons in their favour. But now that I am forty and have lost those passions which make society tolerable, now that I find nothing in it save meanness and futility, and have no further need of my kind as an escape from torment, the inclination for labour and retirement has grown strong in me, to the exclusion of all other feelings. For this reason I have withdrawn from society; and now I am incessantly pestered to go back to it! I am accused of misanthropy and other failings! What conclusion may we draw from this fantastic disparity? Man's need to censure everything.

CCCXXIV. I AM a student only of what pleases

me, and but exercise my brain on such ideas as it finds interesting. They may turn out to be useful either to myself or others, or they may turn out to be useless. Time may or may not bring circumstances in its train which will render my stores of knowledge profitable. In either case, I shall have enjoyed the inestimable advantage of having done nothing against the grain, of having lived up to my opinions and my character.

CCCXXV. I HAVE destroyed my passions rather as a violent rider may kill his horse, because he cannot govern it.

CCCXXVI. THE first occasions of my grief have served me as chain-mail against the others.

CCCXXVII. I STILL entertain for M. de la Borde that feeling which any well-bred man must have on passing a friend's tomb.

CCCXXVIII. I CERTAINLY have things to complain of, and perhaps men; but I keep silence about the men and only complain about the things. If I avoid the company of the former it is solely that I would not live with those who make me bear the burden of the latter.

CCCXXIX. IN order to reach me, Fortune must

comply with those conditions which my character imposes upon her.

CCCXXX. WHEN my heart feels need of tenderness, I recall the loss of friends who are no longer with me and of women death has taken. I live in their graves, and send my spirit to wander about theirs. I have, alas, three tombs.

CCCXXXI. I FEEL punished and not rewarded, when I have done good and it chances to be discovered.

CCCXXXII. BY giving up Society and Fortune I found happiness, peace and health, and even riches. Also I found, in spite of the proverb, that he who abandons the game shall win it.

CCCXXXIII. CELEBRITY is the reproof of merit, the punishment of genius. I consider mine, such as it is, as an informer, born to trouble my repose. As I destroy it, I feel the joy of triumphing over an enemy. Sensibility with me has even conquered self-esteem, and my vanity of authorship died in the destruction of my interest in men.

CCCXXXIV. TRUE and tender friendship will suffer no alloy of other sentiment. I count it great happiness that friendship had already been perfectly

established between M. de M . . . and myself before I had the opportunity of rendering him that service which I did render, and of which I alone was capable. If a suspicion had been possible that all he had done for me was dictated by an expectation of finding me such as he did find me in that particular circumstance, if it had been possible for him to have foreseen the circumstance itself, my happiness would have been poisoned for all time.

CCCXXXV. MY whole life is woven of threads which are in blatant contrast to my principles. I have no liking for Princes, and yet am attached to both a Prince and a Princess; I am famous for republican maxims, and yet many of my friends are covered with orders of monarchy; I love self-chosen poverty, and live among rich people; I avoid all honours, and yet some have come to me. Literature is almost my only consolation, and yet I meet no distinguished intellects & never go to the Academy. Moreover, I believe that illusions are necessary to man, yet live without illusion; I believe that the passions are more profitable than reason, and yet no longer know what passion is . . .

CCCXXXVI. I KNOW nothing of what I have learned, I have divined the little I still know.

CCCXXXVII. ONE of the great misfortunes of

mankind is that even his good qualities are sometimes useless to him, and that the art of employing and well directing them is often the latest fruit of his experience.

CCCXXXVIII. INDECISION and anxiety are to the mind and soul as is the Extraordinary Question to the body.

CCCXXXIX. AN honest fellow stripped of all his illusions is the ideal man. Though he may have little wit, his society is always pleasant. As nothing matters to him, he cannot be pedantic; yet is he tolerant, remembering that he too has had the illusions which still beguile his neighbour. He is trustworthy in his dealings, because of his indifference; he avoids all quarrelling and scandal in his own person, and either forgets or passes over such gossip or bickering as may be directed against himself. He is more entertaining than other people because he is in a constant state of epigram against his neighbour. He dwells in truth, and smiles at the stumbling of others who grope in falsehood. He watches from a lighted place the ludicrous antics of those who walk in a dim room at random. Laughing, he breaks the false weight and measure of men and things.

CCCXL. WE are startled at violent means, but they suit strong natures well enough; and vigorous spirits depend on the extreme . . .

CCCXLI. THE contemplative life is often a wretched one. We ought to do more, and think less, and not watch ourselves living.

CCCXLII. MAN may aspire to virtue, but he cannot reasonably aspire to truth.

CCCXLIII. THE Jansenism of Christianity is simply pagan Stoicism degraded in form & brought within reach of the Christian rabble. And this sect has Pascals and Arnauds to defend it!

CHAPTER VI.

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OF WOMEN
OF LOVE, MARRIAGE,
AND GALLANTRY

CCCXLIV. I AM ASHAMED OF YOUR opinion of me; I have not always been as Céladon as you see me now. If I told you three or four incidents of my youth you would see that it was not too impeccable, and had been passed in the best of company.

CCCXLV. IF love is to appear disinterested it must be made of love alone, must solely live and feed on love.

CCCXLVI. WHEN I see infatuation in a woman, or in a man for that matter, I begin to suspect a lack of sensibility. This rule has never failed me.

CCCXLVII. A SENTIMENT that can be valued has no value.

CCCXLVIII. LOVE is like an epidemic: the more we fear it, the more we are prone to catch it.

CCCXLIX. A MAN in love always tries to be more agreeable than he is; that is why nearly all lovers are ridiculous.

CCCL. SOME women have made themselves miserable for life, have ruined and dishonoured themselves, because a man has killed their love for him by managing his powder clumsily, or cutting

one of his nails unskilfully, or putting on a stocking inside out.

CCCLI. A PROUD disinterested spirit, having felt great passions, thenceforward fears and avoids them; especially he disdains all petty gallantry, as one who has known friendship disdains acquaintance and the little partnerships of every day.

CCCLII. IT is often asked why women parade their men, and most of the answers given are derogatory to the latter. The real reason is that this is the only way in which women can savour their empire to the full.

CCCLIII. MIDDLE-CLASS women who entertain the hope or fancy of being something in the world, lose Nature's happiness and miss Society's. They are the most unfortunate creatures I have known.

CCCLIV. SOCIETY diminishes men, & reduces women to nothing.

CCCLV. WOMEN frequently entertain fancies and infatuations, sometimes feel liking, and even, occasionally, ascend to the level of passion. Steadfast affection is the sentiment of which they are least capable. They are formed for converse with our

weakness and folly, not with our reason. Physical and surface sympathies abound between their sex and ours, but intellectual, spiritual, and moral affinities are very rare. This is proved by the scant consideration they have for a man of forty, even when they are getting near that age themselves. If at any time they favour such an one, you will find that it is for some dishonourable end, or through calculated selfishness; and then the exception more than proves the rule. Nor in this instance is it fair to say: Who proves too much proves nothing.

CCCLVI. IT is by self-love that love seduces us; for how can we resist a feeling which enhances what we have in our own sight, restores what we have lost, and gives us what we have not?

CCCLVII. WHEN a man and a woman have an overwhelming passion for each other, it seems to me, in spite of such obstacles dividing them as parents or husband, that they belong to each other in the *name of Nature*, and are lovers by *Divine right*, in spite of human convention or the laws.

CCCLVIII. TAKE the self-love from love, and very little remains. Once love is purged of vanity it is like a feeble convalescent, scarce able to drag itself about.

CCCLIX. LOVE, as it is practised in Society, is

but the exchange of two caprices and the contact of two skins.

CCCLX. WHEN they wish to persuade me to visit such and such a woman, people sometimes say: *she is very lovable*. As if I wanted to love her! They had much better have said: *she is very loving*, for men are more eager to be loved than anxious to love.

CCCLXI. IF you would estimate the extent of a woman's pride in youth, see how much remains even after she has passed the age of pleasing!

CCCLXII. SPEAKING of women's favours, M. de . . . used to say: It is an auction room business, and neither feeling nor merit are ever successful bidders.

CCCLXIII. YOUNG women share this disadvantage with Kings, that they can have no friend. But happily, also, they seem to feel their loss as little. The greatness of Kings and the vanity of young women steal all their sensibility away.

CCCLXIV. IN the political world they say that a wise man makes no conquests: this might pass for truth in the gallant world as well.

CCCLXV. IT is a pleasant thought that the phrase

to know a woman, even in many ancient languages and among the simple peoples who have lived nearest to Nature, means to go to bed with her; as if it were quite impossible to know a woman without doing so. If the patriarchs had made this discovery they were more advanced than is usually supposed.

CCCLXVI. IN the war between men and women, the former have this great advantage, the unvirtuous among the enemy are on their side.

CCCLXVII. THERE are girls who can sell, but cannot give themselves.

CCCLXVIII. THE noblest love unlocks the gate of the soul to little passions; and marriage unlocks the gate of the soul to the little passions of one's wife: ambition, vanity, and such.

CCCLXIX. HOWEVER fine & well-disposed you are, and however unimaginably perfect the woman you love, you will never be quite able to forgive her your predecessor, or your successor.

CCCLXX. PERHAPS one should have experienced love in order to know friendship.

CCCLXXI. MEN'S commerce with women is an armed commerce, such as Europeans carry on in India.

CCCLXXII. FOR a man's intimacy with a woman to be really interesting to him, there must be either gratification, memory, or desire between them.

CCCLXXIII. A WITTY woman once told me something which may well be the genuine secret of her sex: that in choosing a lover each one of her kind takes more account of how other women regard him than of how she regards him herself.

CCCLXXIV. TO prove her great passion for him, although she has not got one, Mme. de . . . has gone to rejoin her lover in England. Nowadays even scandal is governed by public opinion.

CCCLXXV. I REMEMBER hearing a man forswear the Opera girls, because, as he said, he had found them as false as honest women.

CCCLXXVI. THE ear and the mind go in for gossip, not so the heart.

CCCLXXVII. FEELING creates thought, men willingly agree; but they will not so willingly agree that thought creates feeling, though this is scarcely less true.

CCCLXXVIII. WHAT is a mistress? A woman at whose side one forgets what one has learned by heart, the manifold blemishes of the sex.

CCCLXXIX. TIME has replaced the sauce of mystery by the sauce of scandal in our love affairs.

CCCLXXX. IT would seem that love never seeks real perfection, and even fears it. It delights only in the perfection it has itself imagined; it is like those kings who recognise no greatness except in their own works.

CCCLXXXI. NATURALISTS tell us that degeneration begins through the female in every animal species. Philosophers of social civilisation might affirm the same in ethics.

CCCLXXXII. THE zest of intimacy with women lies in the multitude of *understandings* inseparable from it; for though *understandings* between men are vexatious, or at least insipid, they are pleasant enough between man and woman.

CCCLXXXIII. IT is a common saying that the most beautiful woman in the world can only give what she has. This is entirely false. She gives exactly what the recipient thinks he has received; for imagination fixes the value in this sort of favour.

CCCLXXXIV. INDECENCY and lack of shame are absurd in all systems of philosophy: as much in those which insist upon abstinence as in those which encourage enjoyment.

CCCLXXXV. I HAVE noticed in reading the Scriptures that when the author wishes to reproach Humanity for its passions or crimes, he speaks of the *children of men;* but substitutes *man born of woman* when he is dealing with folly or weakness.

CCCLXXXVI. MAN would be too wretched in a woman's presence if he remembered the least item of certain matters which he has by heart.

CCCLXXXVII. IN giving man an absolutely ineradicable taste for women, Nature seems to have foreseen that without it man's contempt for the vices of the sex, and principally for its vanity, would have gravely prejudiced the maintenance and propagation of the race.

CCCLXXXVIII. A MAN once told me quite seriously that one who had not visited plenty of *girls* could not know women; he was a great admirer of his own wife, who deceived him.

CCCLXXXIX. MARRIAGE and Celibacy are both evils: it is better to choose the one which is not incurable.

CCCXC. IN love it is sufficient for the good qualities and graces of each party to please the other; but in a happy marriage the very faults of husband and

wife must be mutually delightful or at least agreeable.

CCCXCI. LOVE is a pleasanter thing than marriage, for the same reason that the Romans are more amusing than History.

CCCXCII. HYMEN comes after Love, smoke after fire.

CCCXCIII. THE wisest & most exact statement ever made about Celibacy and Marriage was that, whichever your choice, you would repent of it. Fontenelle in his old age was sorry that he had not married; but by that time a matter of ninety-five care-free years had slipped his memory.

CCCXCIV. THE reasonable aspect of marriage is its only advantage, the foolish its only attraction; what lies between is but a base calculation.

CCCXCV. WOMAN must be married before she is or can be anything. Her husband is a kind of labourer who teases her body, rough-hews her intellect, and puts a half polish on her soul.

CCCXCVI. MARRIAGE, as it obtains among the great, is a kind of conventional indecency.

CCCXCVII. WE have heard men who pass for

respectable, and whole collections of well-considered people, congratulate Mlle . . . , a young, beautiful, virtuous and entertaining lady, on her marriage with M. . . . , a diseased, repulsive, disingenuous, imbecile & rich old man. If one thing more than another characterises this lamentable century it is the possibility of such ridiculous congratulation, such reversal of every natural and moral instinct.

CCCXCVIII. HUSBANDS labour under this disadvantage, that the wittiest can be everywhere superfluous, even in his own home; can be boring if he does not speak, and ridiculous if he says the simplest thing. His wife's love may relieve a part of this embarrassment; that is why M. . . . said to his lady: 'My dear friend, help me not to be ridiculous.'

CCCXCIX. DIVORCE is so entirely natural that, in many houses, he sleeps each night between the husband and wife.

CD. THANKS to the passion of women, the finest man in the world must be either a husband or a lover, either dissolute or impotent.

CDI. THE misalliance of two hearts is the worst of all.

CDII. TO be loved is not everything; we must

insist on appreciation also: and this is only possible from persons of similar quality to ourselves. It follows that love cannot exist, or at least cannot endure, between beings too markedly unequal; nor does this result from the vanity of the superior, but from his proper pride—an instinct of which it would be absurd and impossible to deprive humanity. Vanity is only entertained by weak and vitiated natures, but pride is, past question, a necessary attribute of each well-ordered character.

CDIII. WOMEN only give to friendship what they borrow from love.

CDIV. WHEN an ugly and imperious woman would find favour with the other sex, she is a beggar insisting upon charity.

CDV. A LOVER too well beloved soon loves his mistress less, and *vice versa*. Is it in love as with other favours, that when we despair of repaying we lose our gratitude?

CDVI. THE woman who values her qualities of mind and soul more than her beauty is superior to her sex. The woman who values her beauty more than her qualities of mind and soul is of her sex. But the woman who values her birth and position more than her beauty is at once outside and below her sex.

CDVII. IT appears that women have one less section in their brains than men, and one more fibre in their hearts. They need a special organisation to enable them to caress, to care for, and to put up with children.

CDVIII. NATURE has entrusted the conservation of all beings to maternal love, and has set it in exquisite, inseparable pleasures and pains, that mothers may not lack their recompense.

CDIX. ALL is true and all is false in love; love is the only thing about which it is impossible to say anything absurd.

CDX. A LOVER who pities a reasonable being reminds me of a man who reads fairy tales and banters another because he is reading history.

CDXI. LOVE is an adventure in a stormy market, and invariably leads to bankruptcy; and it is the bankrupt who gathers the dishonour.

CDXII. ONE of the best reasons for not marrying is that a man is never entirely a woman's dupe, and a woman never utterly a man's.

CDXIII. HAVE you ever known a woman who, seeing some male friend of hers cultivating another

woman, has believed that the other woman can be unkind? Such is the opinion they have of each other. Draw your own conclusions.

CDXIV. THERE is no bad thought that man can have of woman, without all women having a worse.

CDXV. SOME men have all that is needed to lift them above those petty considerations which thrust mankind below its proper merit, and yet marriage or relations with women have placed them on a level with those who are by no means on a level with them. Wedded life or gallantry serves as a conduit for the smaller passions.

CDXVI. I HAVE known men and women in Society who do not ask sentiment for sentiment, but act for act; and would call off the latter bargain if it seemed likely to lead to the former.

CHAPTER VII.

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OF WISE MEN AND MEN OF LETTERS

CDXVII. THERE IS A KIND OF VEHEment energy, the inevitable mother or companion of a certain type of talent, which usually condemns its possessors to the misfortune, not of being actually without moral sense or having no admirable instincts, but of yielding constantly to faults which would seem to imply the absence of all morality. They are not masters of their consuming fierceness, and it renders them detestable. It is distressing to think that even when Pope and Swift in England, and Voltaire and Rousseau in France, are judged without jealousy and hatred, and even equitably and kindly, on the attested and admitted evidence of their friends and admirers, they may still be accused and convicted of most reprehensible actions and also, at times, of the most perverse sentiments. *O altitudo!*

CDXVIII. IT has been made a subject for remark that writers on Natural History, Physics, Physiology, and Chemistry, are usually men of mild and equable character, and of a happy disposition; while writers on Law and Politics, and even on Moral Philosophy, are of a dismal and melancholy temper. The reason is not far to seek: the former consider Nature and survey the work of the great Being, while the latter observe Society and meditate upon the works of man. Their studies are bound to effect them differently.

CDXIX. IF we justly examine the combination of unusual mental and spiritual qualities necessary to a fine discernment and appreciation of good poetry: the touch and delicacy of ear and understanding: we shall soon be satisfied that poets can have even fewer competent judges of their work than geometricians, in spite of the pretension of all classes to connoiseurship. Those poets, therefore, who count the public as nothing and are only concerned with capable critics, should do with their books what the famous mathematician, Viète, did with his, at a time when the study of mathematics was less fashionable than it is today. He only printed a very few copies of his works, for distribution among such as might understand, and be entertained or assisted by them: to the rest of the public he gave no thought at all. But Viète was rich and most poets are poor; besides, a geometrician either has less vanity than a poet or estimates it better.

CDXX. THERE are men in whom *wit*, that universal instrument, is but a *talent*. They seem to dominate their fellows by it, but it they cannot dominate, for it will not obey the orders of their reason.

CDXXI. I WOULD say of metaphysicians what Scaliger said of the Basques: they are supposed to understand each other, but I do not believe it.

CDXXII. HAS a Philosopher, whose inducement is conceit, any right to despise the Courtier, whose motive is gain? It seems to me that the latter carries off the golden coins, while the former is content to hear the chink of them. Is D'Alembert, whose van ity makes him a courtier of Voltaire, at all better than any courtier of Louis the Fourteenth, whose object was power or pension?

CDXXIII. WHEN a kindly-disposed person covets the petty privilege of pleasing others beside his friends (as do so many men, & authors in particular, whose trade is pleasing), it is clear that he can only be prompted thereto by some self-interest or vanity. His sole choice, therefore, lies between a harlot's or a coquette's part, or if you will the part of a comedian. Only the man who makes himself pleasant in a company because he finds that company amusing can really be said to play an honest part.

CDXXIV. SOMEONE has said that stealing from the Ancients is piracy below the Line, but that borrowing from the Moderns is picking pockets at a street corner.

CDXXV. WHEN verse adds wit to the thought of a man who has ordinarily little enough, he possesses the thing called talent; but when, as often happens, verse kills the wit in the thought of a witty writer,

the fact affords proof positive that he is not a poet.

CDXXVI. MOST contemporary books seem as if they had been made in one day, from yesterday's reading.

CDXXVII. GOOD taste, tact, and propriety have more in common than Men of Letters affect to believe. Tact is good taste applied to bearing and conduct, and propriety is good taste applied to conversation.

CDXXVIII. ARISTOTLE wisely lays it down in his Rhetoric that every metaphor founded on analogy must be equally true if it be reversed. Thus, old age has been called life's winter, and if you turn the metaphor round you will find it as apposite: that winter is the old age of the year.

CDXXIX. TO become a great figure in Letters, as in Politics, or to leave some sensible mark upon them at the least, one must be born at the right moment and find all prepared.

CDXXX. GREAT lords and wits seek out each others' company, their instinct being to unite two classes, one of which makes a little more dust than the second and the other a little more noise than the first.

CDXXXI. MEN of Letters delight in those whom they amuse, just as travellers delight in those whom they astonish.

CDXXXII. WHAT is a Man of Letters, if he be unsupported by his own character, by the excellence of his friends, and by a competency? Should he so lack this last, at all events, as to find it impossible to live agreeably in that Society to which his talents call him, what other need can he be said to have of his fellows? The only course open to him is to seek out some privacy where he may develop his spirit, his reason, & his nature in tranquillity. Why should he bear the burdens of a social state which denies him each single advantage it bestows on other occupations? More than one man of letters has found a happiness in this exile, when he has been forced to embrace it, which he had vainly sought in any other place. Such a man can say that in refusing him all things the world has given him all things. There are countless occasions for quoting the words of Themistocles: 'Alas, we were perishing if we had not perished!'

CDXXXIII. WHEN they have read some conspicuously virtuous book, people will often say: 'What a pity that writers give no picture of themselves in what they write; a work of this kind cannot tell us whether the author was really such as he

would have us think.' This remark is certainly justified on occasion; but I have noticed that it is often made to excuse the reader from doing honour to the virtues reflected in the books of a virtuous writer.

CDXXXIV. AN author with genuine taste attempting to appeal to our surfeited public is like a young woman in the centre of a circle of old libertines.

CDXXXV. A LITTLE philosophy leads men to underrate scholarship, but much philosophy will teach them to esteem it.

CDXXXVI. A POET'S labour—and often the labour of a general author as well—is little profitable to himself, and his guerdon from the public varies between *many thanks* and *go about your business*. His reward must lie in self-appreciation, and the process of time.

CDXXXVII. A WRITER'S rest, when he has done good work, wins more respect from the public than a fecund activity in producing average books: just as the silence of a brilliant talker carries more weight than the chatter of a poor one.

CDXXXVIII. THE success of countless books depends on the sympathy existing between a witless Author and a witless Public.

CDXXXIX. TO see the composition of the *Académie Française* one would expect its motto to be that line of Lucretius:

Certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate.

CDXL. THE honour of belonging to the *Académie Française* is like the Cross of Saint-Louis, which one is just as likely to see in shilling taverns as at the suppers of Marly.

CDXLI. THE *Académie Française* is like the *Opéra* which keeps itself on extraneous revenue, such as subsidies exacted from provincial comic opera, and charges for going from the pit into the boxes. In the same way, the *Académie* keeps itself by the privileges it procures for its members. It is like the Cidalise of Gresset:

Ayez-la, c'est d'abord, ce que vous lui devez,
Et vous l'estimerez après, si vous pouvez.

CDXLII. THERE is something in common between literary, and above all theatrical, reputations and the fortunes which used of old to be made in the West Indies. In the early days it was almost sufficient to reach those islands to return with incalculable riches; but the very vastness of the fortunes thus obtained was prejudicial to those of the following generation, since the exhausted earth could yield no more.

CDXLIII. MOST theatrical and literary success in our day is a success of ridicule.

CDXLIV. PHILOSOPHY searches out each profitable virtue in Ethics and Politics; Eloquence renders it popular; and Poetry makes it, as it were, proverbial.

CDXLV. AN eloquent illogical sophist stands in the same relation to a philosophic orator as a conjuror does to a mathematician, Pinetti to Archimedes.

CDXLVI. A MAN is not necessarily intelligent because he has plenty of ideas, any more than he is a good general because he has plenty of soldiers.

CDXLVII. MEN of Letters are often censured for retiring from the world. People want them to take an interest *in* Society, even when they can take nothing *out* of her; expect them, in fact, to be eternally present at a lottery in which they hold no ticket.

CDXLVIII. WHAT I admire in the ancient philosophers is their desire to make their lives conform to their writings, a trait which we notice in Plato, Theophrastus and many others. Practical morality was so truly their philosophy's essence that many, such as Xenocrates, Polemon, and Speusippus, were placed at the head of schools although they had

written nothing at all. Socrates was none the less the foremost philosopher of his age, although he had not composed a single book or studied any other science than ethics.

CDXLIX. THE things we know best are: first what we have divined, then what our experience of men and things has taught us, then the reflections induced by our reading (that is to say not from books but because of books), and lastly what we have been told in books or by our masters.

CDL. MEN of Letters, and especially Poets, are like peacocks. We throw a few occasional meagre grains into their cage, and sometimes have them out to see them spread their tails.... But the cocks and hens and ducks and turkeys wander free in the yard, and stuff their crops as much as they please.

CDLI. SUCCESSES breed successes, just as money breeds money.

CDLII. THERE are some books which the most intelligent man in the world cannot write without jobbing a carriage, without going a round of consultation, that is, to men and things, and libraries and manuscripts.

CDLIII. IT is almost impossible for Philosophers

and Poets not to hate mankind. Firstly, because their taste and talent leads them to the observation of Society, always a heartbreaking enterprise; and, secondly, because the Society on which they exercise that talent hardly ever rewards it (indeed it is lucky to escape unpunished), and this woeful fact is enough to redouble their tendency to sadness.

CDLIV. THE Memoirs which even the most seemingly modest Government Officials and Men of Letters have left behind to furnish a history of their lives, betray a secret vanity & remind us of that saint who left a hundred thousand crowns to pay the expenses of his canonisation.

CDLV. IT is a grave misfortune when our character loses those rights for us over Society, which our talent has given us.

CDLVI. GREAT men have produced their greatest work after the age of passion; so is the earth more fertile after volcanoes.

CDLVII. THE vanity of worldlings takes clever advantage of the vanity of Men of Letters; for these last have made more than one reputation which has led to high office. At first it is a matter of windy nothings upon either side; but with these the skilful intriguer can swell the sails of his fortune.

CDLVIII. POLITICAL Economists are surgeons with excellent scalpels and blunted bistouries; they work on the dead to a marvel and torture the living.

CDLIX. MEN of Letters very seldom feel jealous of the exaggerated reputation which books written by men about the Court sometimes acquire; they regard these successes as decent women regard the triumphs of *misses*.

CDLX. THE Theatre either confirms or changes the manners of the day; it must, in the nature of things, either chastise or propagate folly. In France we have seen the two systems working alternately.

CDLXI. MANY authors think that they love glory when they only love vanity. The two things are very different and even mutually opposed; for the first is a great, and the second a little passion. There is the same difference between vanity and glory as between a coxcomb and a lover.

CDLXII. POSTERITY judges Men of Letters by their work and not by their position. *What they did, not what they were*, would seem to be Posterity's motto.

CDLXIII. SPERONE-SPERONI very well explains how an author's expression may be limpidly

clear to himself and yet obscure to his reader: the reader, he says, is working from expression to thought, & the author from thought to expression.

CDLXIV. THE books an author writes with enjoyment are often his best, just as a love child is the handsomest.

CDLXV. IN the Fine Arts, and even in other matters, it is only what we have not been taught that we know really well.

CDLXVI. THE painter gives soul to a face, and the poet gives a face to a feeling or an idea.

CDLXVII. WHEN La Fontaine's work is bad it is through carelessness, when La Motte's is bad it is through over-subtlety.

CDLXVIII. PERFECTION in writing a comedy of character is attained by so arranging the intrigue that it could not possibly serve for any other play. Perhaps in all the drama only *Tartufe* can be said to fulfil this condition.

CDLXIX. HERE is an entertaining proof that French philosophers are the worst citizens in the world: they print a great many truths essential to political and economic prosperity, and give a great

deal of useful advice in their books; then nearly all the sovereigns of Europe, with the exception of France, follow their teaching; then the prosperity of foreign nations increases, while France remains where she was; then France, by retaining all her old abuses, sinks to a condition of inferiority: this is the fault of the French philosophers. In the same connection, we recall the answer of the Duke of Tuscany to a Frenchman who congratulated him on the felicitous changes he had effected in his States. 'You give too much of your praise to me,' he said, 'for I have taken all my ideas from your French books.'

CDLXX. IN one of the principal churches of Antwerp I saw the tomb of the celebrated printer, Plantin, decorated to his memory with superb paintings by Rubens. And, so seeing, I recalled how the two Estiennes, Henri and Robert, whose Greek and Latin scholarship rendered the greatest service to the world of letters, dragged out a miserable old age in France, and how Charles Estienne, their successor, died in hospital, when he had contributed almost as much as they to the advancement of learning. I recalled that poverty drove André Duchêne, the father of French history, from Paris to the refuge of his little Champagne farm, and how he died through falling off the top of a cart piled to an enormous height with hay. Adrien de Valois, the first historian of metals, met with a scarcely better

fate, and Samson, the father of geography, went on foot, up to the age of seventy, to give lessons for his daily bread. Everyone knows the fate of Du Ryer, Tristan, Maynard, and so many others. Corneille wanted for soup during his last illness, and La Fontaine fared but very little better. If Racine, Boileau, Molière, and Quinault were more fortunate, it was because their talents were more especially devoted to the King. The Abbé de Longuerue, who has told & collected many such anecdotes of the evil destiny attending illustrious Men of Letters in France, says in conclusion: 'Such has always been our custom in this wretched country!' That famous catalogue, prepared for the King and presented to Colbert, of Men of Letters whom His Majesty might desire to pension, was the work of Chapelain, Perrault, Tallemant, and the Abbé Gallois; and these left out such of their colleagues as they personally disliked, and substituted the names of several foreign scholars. They knew full well that both King and Minister would be the more flattered to receive praise which rose four hundred leagues away from Paris.

CHAPTER VIII.

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OF SLAVERY AND LIBERTY OF FRANCE BEFORE AND AFTER THE REVOLUTION

CDLXXI. THOSE WHO HAVE SPOKEN enthusiastically of the savage as opposed to the social state, have been laughed to scorn; and yet I would like to know what answer can be made to these three objections: no instance has been found among savages of a madman, a suicide, or a man who has pined for a social existence. On the other hand, a great number of Europeans, at the Cape and in North & South America, who have rejoined their compatriots after living among the natives, have finally reverted to the woods. Now let any who would answer this argument do so without sophistry or verbiage.

CDLXXII. THE drawback to Humanity on its social side is that, although the definition *evil is that which harms* is, ethically and politically, sound enough, the statement that *good is that which helps* is quite untrustworthy; since the moment's good may be for long or eternally harmful.

CDLXXIII. WHEN we consider that the only result of the labour & light of thirty or forty centuries has been to deliver three hundred million men, all over the earth, into the grip of some thirty despots; when we consider that these despots are mostly ignorant and imbecile, and that each is governed by three or four knaves who are mostly stupid, what must we think of Humanity, or hope for her future?

CDLXXIV. NEARLY all History is a procession of horrors; but, although tyrants hate History in their own lifetime, a general transmission of such crimes is not unpleasing to their descendants, for it distracts attention from their own. History is the only consolation left to the peoples, for it teaches them that their ancestors were as unhappy as themselves, or more unhappy.

CDLXXV. THE normal French character is a blend of monkey and setter. It is frolicsome, comical, & fundamentally mischievous like the monkey; and, like the low-bred sporting dog, it fawns and licks it master's hand when it is beaten; it lets itself be put on the chain, and then leaps about in ecstacy when it is loosed for the chase.

CDLXXVI. THE Royal Treasure used to be called the Savings. But I suppose people learned to blush at the lie contained in that name, when they saw the wealth of the State so prodigally squandered, for now it is simply called the Royal Treasure.

CDLXXVII. THE French Nobility's highest title to respect is its direct descent from those thirty thousand helmeted, cuirassed, bracered, and thigh-pieced persons who rode upon horses armoured in iron and trampled eight or nine million of the real Nation's naked ancestors under their feet. What a

wonderful claim to the love and respect of their descendants! And to give a finishing touch to the respectability of this Class, it is renewed & recruited from those who have grown rich by robbing the cottages of the poor who are in no state to pay their impositions. O wretched institutions of Humanity, shaped to inspire all horror and contempt, and yet demanding our respect and reverence!

CDLXXVIII. TO require a man to be a gentleman before he can be a ship's captain, is as logical as requiring him to be a King's Secretary before he is fit for foremast-hand or cabinboy.

CDLXXIX. THAT none may reach a high position in the State unless he be a gentleman is the most fatal of all absurd ideas, and one which is acted upon in nearly every country. It is as if asses should forbid horses all participation in tilts and tournaments.

CDLXXX. NATURE does not go to consult Chérin when she would make a saint or a genius.

CDLXXXI. WHAT does it matter if Titus or Tiberius be on the throne when every minister is a Sejanus?

CDLXXXII. IF such an historian as Tacitus had written the chronicle of our nobler kings, making

an exact statement of all those tyrannical actions and abuses of authority which are now for the most part buried in deep darkness, few of their reigns would inspire less horror than that of Tiberius.

CDLXXXIII. WE may say that there was no more civil government in Rome after the death of Tiberius Gracchus; when Scipio Nasica left the Senate to go about his deed of violence against the Tribune, he taught the Romans that force alone would make laws in the Forum from that time forth. He was before Sulla in bringing this deadly mystery to light.

CDLXXXIV. THE strong secondary interest we feel in reading Tacitus lies in the continual and ever novel contrast between the miserable slaves he sketches for us and the old Republican liberty: between the characters of such as Scaurus and Scipio and the baseness of their descendants. In fact the most effective aspect of Tacitus is Livy.

CDLXXXV. KINGS & priests have proscribed the doctrine of suicide to make certain that we escape nothing of our slavery. They wish the dungeon in which we are cast to have no issue; they are like that villain in Dante who walled up the door of the wretched Ugolino's prison.

CDLXXXVI. WE write books on Princes' interest,

and speak of studying the interest of Princes; has any one ever spoken of studying the interest of the people?

CDLXXXVII. ONLY the history of free peoples is worth our attention; the history of men under a despotism is merely a collection of anecdotes.

CDLXXXVIII. THE real Turkey in Europe is France. In twenty different English writers you will find the phrase: *Despotic countries such as France and Turkey . . .*

CDLXXXIX. MINISTERS are nothing but stewards, and are only important because the estate of the gentleman they serve is very large.

CDXC. A MINISTER often strengthens his own position by making his master commit more and more evils and follies to the detriment of the people; one would say that this kind of complicity binds them more closely together.

CDXCI. WHY does a minister in France remain in power in spite of a hundred evil actions? And why is he always dismissed for a single good one?

CDXCII. WHO could have supposed that some people would be led to support despotism through

their belief in the necessity of encouraging the Arts? It is almost incredible to what an extent the brilliance of Louis the Fourteenth's reign has multiplied the number of those who think along these lines. According to them the final object of Society is to have great tragedies and fine comedies. They would forgive every evil done by the priesthood on the ground that, without priests, there would be no *Tartufe*.

CDXCIII. MERIT and repute give a man no more right to office in France than winning *the rose* gives a village girl the right to be presented at Court.

CDXCIV. FRANCE is that place where it is always useful to expose your vices & always dangerous to expose your virtues.

CDXCV. PARIS is a singular country where it costs thirty sous to dine, four francs to take the air, a hundred louis for the superfluous adjuncts of the necessary, and four hundred louis if we would have the latter without the former.

CDXCVI. PARIS: a city of pleasures and amusements where four-fifths of the people die of grief.

CDXCVII. THE phrase which Saint Theresa used to describe Hell is equally applicable to Paris: *A place that stinks, and where there is no love.*

CDXCVIII. IT is remarkable that there should be such a multitude of formalities in a Nation as lively and joyous as ours; and the pedantic gravity of our public assemblies is just as astonishing. It almost looks as if the French legislature intentionally acted as a counterpoise to the French citizen.

CDXCIX. IT is an established fact that, at the time of Monsieur de Guibert's appointment as governor of the *Invalides*, there were six hundred so-called soldiers there, who had never been wounded in any way, and who, in practically every instance, had never taken part in a siege or battle. Their service had been as coachmen or lackeys to Lords and Government Officials. Here is a text and matter for reflection!

D. IN France we harry the man who rings the alarum bell, and leave the man in peace who starts the fire.

DI. NEARLY all women, who live at Versailles or have some little consideration in Paris, are only bourgeois of quality: Mesdames Macquart, presented or unpresented.

DII. THERE is no longer a French public or a French Nation, for the same reason that lint is not linen.

DIII. THE public is governed as it reasons; its own prerogative is foolish speech & that of its governors is foolish action.

DIV. WHEN some public absurdity takes place, I think of the few strangers who may be in Paris at the time, and am ready to weep, for I still love my country.

DV. THE English are the only nation which has found out how to limit the power of people who have their faces on half-crowns.

DVI. HOW is it that, even under the vilest despotism, the race can bear to continue? It is because Nature has sweeter and more imperious laws than any tyrant; because, whether Domitian or Titus reigns, a babe will smile at its mother.

DVII. A PHILOSOPHER once said: I cannot understand how any Frenchman who has been but a single time into the King's antechamber or the Œil-de-bœuf, can ever say of anyone at all: *He's a great lord.*

DVIII. THE flatterers of Princes say that the hunt is an image of war, and perhaps the peasants, whose fields are left desolate, may think the same.

DIX. IT is unfortunate for man, but fortunate perhaps for Princes, that the poor and pitiful have not the same pride or instinct as the elephant, which will not propagate its kind when in captivity.

DX. TWO things are to be especially noted in the unending struggle which Society allows between the rich and the poor, the noble and the plebeian, the influential and the unknown man. In the first place the actions and words of the two combatants are judged by quite different weights and measures, those of the one against a pound weight, let us say, and those of the other against ten or a hundred. The fact that this disproportion is an admitted one and that we start from it as from a fixed point, is really horrible; that such a standard of acceptance should be sanctioned by law and custom is one of Society's most startling vices, and in itself enough to explain the rest. In the second place it will be noticed that, beyond this initial inequality, there is a further criminal lack of justice: the poor man's pound and the plebeian's is speedily reduced to a quarter of its weight, while ten are added to the rich man's or the noble's hundred, and a hundred to his thousand. This is the natural and inevitable effect of their respective positions; for the first have all their kind to envy them, while the second find props and accomplices in their own few friends, who hope to share in the profits or win a like advantage for themselves.

DXI. IT is an incontestable fact that France contains seven million men in need of alms, and twelve million incapable of giving them.

DXII. THE Nobility, its members say, is an intermediary between the King and the People. . . . . Exactly, just as hounds are intermediary between men and hares.

DXIII. WHAT is a Cardinal? A priest who dresses in red and gets a hundred thousand crowns from the King for flouting him in the name of the Pope.

DXIV. THE majority of social institutions would seem designed to keep mankind in a state of mental mediocrity, as better fitting him to govern or be governed.

DXV. A CITIZEN of Virginia, who possesses fifty acres of fertile land, pays the equivalent of forty-two sous in our money to enjoy it in peace, under just & benignant laws, with government protection, with security assured to his property & person, with civil and religious liberty, with the right to vote at elections, to be a member of Congress, and, possibly, in course of time, a legislator. But a French peasant of the same standing, in Limousin or the Auvergne, has to submit to tailage, twentieths, and every kind of crushing imposition, for the privilege of being

insulted at the caprice of a subdelegate & arbitrarily imprisoned, and for the right to bequeath to his plundered family this wretched and degrading heritage.

DXVI. NORTH AMERICA is the one place in the world where the rights of man are fully understood; for the Americans are fitting descendants of those famous republicans who left their country to escape the tyrant. They are a breed of men who have proved themselves worthy to fight & conquer even the English, during a time when the latter had regained their liberty and framed the finest constitution that has ever been. The American revolution will be useful to England herself, for it will force her to re-examine her constitution and weed it of abuses. What will happen then? Being driven out of the continent of North America, the English will throw themselves on the French and Spanish possessions in the West Indies and give them English government, which is founded upon, and even tends to increase, man's natural love of liberty. Then new constitutions will be framed upon a basis of freedom, in the quondam French and Spanish islands, and especially in Spanish America; & thus the English will achieve the signal honour of having given birth to almost the only free countries in the world: the only peoples who will have known and preserved the rights of man, and therefore the sole ones actually worthy to

bear his name. But how many years will be needed to make this revolution operative? Enormous stretches of land will have to be cleansed of the French and Spanish, who would only perpetuate slavery, and colonised with Englishmen, bearing the seeds of freedom. These seeds will germinate, and at last bring forth that final revolution which will drive the English themselves from the two Americas and all the Indies.

DXVII. AN Englishman respects the law & rejects or despises authority; a Frenchman respects authority and despises the law. The latter must be taught to reverse his opinion; but perhaps this is impossible in the present state of the Nation's ignorance: an ignorance which must not be denied on the strength of the enlightenment which has spread in the principal cities.

DXVIII. I AM all and the rest are nothing: there you have Despotism, Aristocracy, and *their* adherents. I am another, another is I: there you have popular government and *its* adherents. Now take your choice.

DXIX. ALL who come forth from the people take arms for the oppression of their class, from the militiaman, and the lawyer who becomes a King's Secretary, to the preacher who leaves his village to

urge submission to an arbitrary power, & the bourgeois' son who takes up historiography. It is the tale of the soldiers of Cadmus over again; the armies in front turn round and attack their brothers.

DXX. THE poor are the negroes of Europe.

DXXI. AS animals perish when they breathe the air above a certain height, a slave dies in the atmosphere of liberty.

DXXII. PEOPLE are governed with the head; kindness of heart is little use in chess.

DXXIII. BACON says that human understanding ought to be begun all over again: so should human Society.

DXXIV. YOU can lessen the People's ferocity by lessening their ills, as surely as you can cure their maladies with soup.

DXXV. I NOTICE that phenomenal men who have performed some revolutionary action seemingly through sheer genius, have often been seconded by the spirit of their time and most auspicious circumstances. We know of the attempts which had been made before the great voyage of Vasco de Gama to the West Indies; and it is common knowledge that

many navigators were convinced of the existence of great islands in the West, and very probably a continent, before Colombus discovered America. We are also aware that Columbus himself possessed the papers of a celebrated pilot with whom he had been in treaty. Philip had prepared everything for the Persian war before his death. And there were several heretical sects in revolt against the abuses of the Roman Communion before Luther and Calvin, and even before Wyclif.

DXXVI. IT is commonly believed that Peter the Great woke up one morning with the idea of a universal Russian re-birth; but even M. de Voltaire admits that it was Peter's father, Alexis, who first formed the plan of importing the arts into that country. There is a maturity to be awaited in all things, and happy is the man who coincides with it!

DXXVII. THE National Assembly of 1789 gave the French people a constitution stronger than themselves; its business now is to raise the Country by good public education to the level of its government. Our legislators must imitate those skilful physicians who introduce restoratives into an exhausted patient by means of stomachics.

DXXVIII. CONSIDERING the great number of deputies to the National Assembly of 1789, and the

mass of unreasonable prepossessions which the majority of them entertained, one would have said that they had destroyed prejudice in order to lay their hands upon it, as men might destroy a building to steal the bricks.

DXXIX. ONE of the reasons why assemblies and bodies of men are scarcely ever capable of other than imbecile action, is that the best thing that could be urged for or against a person or measure cannot be said aloud in public without great danger or inconvenience.

DXXX. THE moving chaos must have been more chaotic in that moment when God created the World than when it reposed in peacable disorder, & the excessive apparent disruption of our Society in its process of reorganisation is somewhat analogous.

DXXXI. COURTIERS and others, who used to batten on the monstrous abuses which were crushing France, now say that such things might have been reformed without being destroyed as we destroyed them. They might as well have expected us to cleanse the Augean stables with a feather-duster.

DXXXII. UNDER the old administration, a philosopher would enunciate a series of daring truths, & straightway some man, who was an office-holder

through birth or accident, would read them, and soften down and modify them, and reduce them to a twentieth, and thus gain the reputation of being a dangerous & brilliant person. Then he would temper his zeal and make his fortune, while the philosopher went to the Bastille. But, under the new administration, it is the philosopher who makes his fortune. Instead of leading him to prison and clearing the mind of a fool to acquire office, his ideas will now bring office to himself; and we must imagine how the host of those whom he puts to one side in his progress will enjoy getting used to this novel state of affairs!

DXXXIII. WAS it not too delightful to see that the Marquis de Bièvre, a grandson of the surgeon Maréchal, thought it necessary to escape to England, as Monsieur de Luxembourg and the great aristocrats escaped, after the catastrophy of the Fourteenth of July in 1789?

DXXXIV. BECAUSE theologians have always been true to the policy of oppressing and throwing dust into the eyes of men, & because they have ever been the tools of government, they now gratuitously assume that the great majority of mankind is perpetually doomed to that state of stupidity which purely mechanical and manual occupations are apt to induce. They take it for granted that artisans

cannot rise to the level of knowledge which will make them value the rights of men as citizens. From this one would imagine such knowledge to be very complicated; but suppose that a quarter of the time and care which has been lavished on brutalising the lower classes had been spent in their enlightenment; suppose that they had been given a catechism containing the first principles of the rights of man & of the duties devolving from those rights, instead of a metaphysical one as absurd as it is unintelligible, we should be astonished to see how far a good elementary text book would have taken the people. Again, suppose that they had preached a gospel of the knowledge of the rights of man & of his duty to defend them, instead of that doctrine of patience, suffering, renunciation, and self-abasement, which is so convenient to the usurper, we would have seen that, when Nature created humanity for a social life, she endowed it with all the good sense necessary to found that social life on reason.

CHAPTER IX.

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STRAY OBSERVATIONS

DXXXV. IT IS A PLEASANT ALLEGORY, Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom, rejecting the flute when she found that it did not become her.

DXXXVI. AND another pretty allegory lies in the myth which tells us that true dreams come forth from the gates of horn and false dreams, all pleasant illusions that is, from the gates of ivory.

DXXXVII. A WIT said of Monsieur . . . , an old companion who returned to him in his prosperity: 'He not only wants his friends to be fortunate, he insists upon it.'

DXXXVIII. A MAN who began seducing a woman before he was ready, said: 'Madame, would it be all the same to you if you retained your virtue for another quarter of an hour?'

DXXXIX. PLUTARCH says that Love puts all the other passions to silence: Love, in fact, is a dictator in whose presence all other dignitaries faint away.

DXL. ON hearing the love of mind for mind inveighed against, because of the harmful properties of imagination, Monsieur .... would say: 'I personally have no need to fear it. When a woman pleases me & makes me happy, I yield to the feeling she inspires, but reserve the right not to be deceived

in her, in case she turns out to be unsuitable. My imagination is the upholsterer whom I send to furnish my apartment when I am satisfied that I shall be properly housed there; if I am not so satisfied, I give no order, & the expense of a memory is spared.'

DXLI. MONSIEUR de L . . . has told me that, in the very moment of his grief on learning of Madame de B . . .'s unfaithfulness, he realised that he no longer cared for her, that his love had disappeared for ever. He was as a man who walks in a field and hears the noise of a partridge rising and flying away.

DXLII. YOU are surprised that Monsieur de L . . . visits Mme. de D . . . ? But I believe him to be in love with Madame de B . . . , my dear Sir, and you know that a woman is often the intermediate shade that reconciles, rather than matches, two vivid and discordant colours.

DXLIII. A CLUMSY benefactor has been likened to a goat who lets herself be milked and then kicks over the pail.

DXLIV. HIS imagination gives birth to one illusion in the moment of losing another: it is like that rose tree which blossoms all the year round.

DXLV. MONSIEUR . . . declared that he loved

peace, silence, and obscurity above all things. *A sick room, in fact*, said someone.

DXLVI. SOMEONE said to Monsieur . . . , who was a brilliant figure in Society: 'You did not make any great expenditure of your wit yesterday evening at So-and-so's.' 'You must remember the Dutch proverb,' answered Monsieur . . . , '*there can be no economy without small change.*'

DXLVII. A WOMAN is nothing of herself, being only what she appears to the man who pays her attention; that is why she becomes so angry with those who do not see her as she would be seen. They destroy her very existence. Man is less vulnerable, because, even in these circumstances, he remains what he is.

DXLVIII. HIS nobility led him to take a few steps in the direction of Fortune, and then to despise her.

DXLIX. MONSIEUR . . . , who is a confirmed bachelor, remarked that marriage was a state too perfect for imperfect man.

DL. MADAME de Fourq . . . , once said to a lady-companion of hers: 'You never know the right things to say to me under particular circumstances. For instance it is all too likely that I shall some day

lose my husband and be inconsolable; then you must say . . . .'

DLI. MONSIEUR d'Osmond was gambling in public two or three days after his wife had died in the country. 'Surely, d'Osmond,' said someone, 'it is hardly decent to gamble so soon after your wife's death.' 'Oh, but I have not yet heard the news officially,' answered d'Osmond. 'Still it is not right,' persisted the other. 'But I am playing for such small stakes,' d'Osmond replied.

DLII. DIDEROT used to say that an author *may* have a mistress who composes books, but *must* have a wife who composes shirts.

DLIII. A DOCTOR advised Monsieur de . . . . to have a cautery, but the latter refused, and in the course of a few months recovered his health. Meeting him one day & seeing that he was much better, the doctor asked him what remedy he had used. 'None,' answered his patient, 'I have been living well and having a good time all the Summer; I keep a mistress. But now that Winter is coming I am afraid that my eye trouble may return. Would you not advise me to have a cautery?' 'No,' replied the doctor gravely, 'you have a mistress, and that is enough. It might be wiser to leave her and be cauterised, but it is not absolutely necessary. At any rate one cautery is sufficient.'

DLIV. A MAN who cared nothing for life, murmured as he died: 'This will be a sell for Doctor Bouvard.'

DLV. THE tyranny of fashion is a curious thing. Monsieur de la Trémoille, who lived apart from his wife and neither loved nor respected her, heard that she was sick of the smallpox. He shut himself in with her, caught the same disease, died of it, and left her a vast fortune with permission to marry again.

DLVI. THERE is a kind of harmful modesty which is the result of ignorance, and sometimes affects men of superior character to their hurt by keeping them in a state of apparent mediocrity. I am reminded of the remark that a certain gentleman of acknowledged eminence once made at luncheon to some persons about the Court: 'I regret the time it has taken me, gentlemen, to realise my vast superiority to you.'

DLVII. CONQUERORS are always considered as the first of men, just as the lion is always called the king of beasts.

DLVIII. AFTER his journey in Sicily, Monsieur . . . argued against the popular impression that the interior of those parts is infested by brigands. He said that wherever he went he was told that the

robbers were somewhere else. 'Ah, they would not tell you that in Paris,' answered Monsieur de B . . ., that pleasant misanthrope.

DLIX. WE are well aware that there are Parisian thieves known to, and almost acknowledged by, the police; if they are not actual informers they at least obey constabulary discipline. One day the Lieutenant of Police sent for some of these men: 'Such-and-such was stolen on so-and-so in such-and-such a quarter.' 'At what time, Monsieur?' 'At two in the afternoon.' 'It was not we, then, Monsieur; we cannot accept responsibility; it must have been stolen by *strangers*.'

DLX. POPE says that the poets keep the critics and journalists in daily bread: just, added Monsieur . . ., as every honest man in Paris feeds the police-spy.

DLXI. HE was passionate and thought he was wise; I was a fool and suspected it; I was the nearer to wisdom.

DLXII. THERE is an excellent Turkish proverb: 'I give thanks unto thee, O Misfortune, if thou hast journeyed alone.'

DLXIII. THE Italians say: *Sotto umbilico ne religione ne verita.*

DLXIV. AS a justification of Providence, Saint Augustine says that it leaves the evil man upon earth that he may become good, or make the good man better.

DLXV. MANKIND is so perverse that even to hope, even to desire to amend him, and make him reasonable and honest, is an absurdity, a romantic foible not to be pardoned except in simple youth.

DLXVI. 'I HAVE utterly lost my taste for mankind,' said Monsieur de L . . . 'Then you have not lost your taste,' said Monsieur de N . . .

DLXVII. MONSIEUR . . . , a disillusioned old man, once said to me: 'The remainder of my life is a half-sucked orange & I do not know why I squeeze it, for the juice is certainly not worth the effort.'

DLXVIII. OUR language is supposed to be the friend of clarity. If that is so, says Monsieur . . . , it is because we love what most we need; for our language is always ready to fall into obscurity unless it be skilfully handled.

DLXIX. THE Poet, the man of imagination, must believe in God:

Ab Jove principium musis,
or *Ab Jove Musarum primordia*.

DLXX. MONSIEUR . . . used to say that verses, like olives, are better for being kept in the pocket.

DLXXI. FOOLISH, ignorant, and vicious persons go to books for their thoughts and judgment, and for all their elevated and noble sentiments, just as a rich woman goes with her money to a draper.

DLXXII. MONSIEUR . . . says that scholars pave the temple of Glory.

DLXXIII. MONSIEUR . . . is a true Greek pedant to whom every modern fact recalls an ancient instance. If you speak to him of the Abbé Terray, he at once cites Aristides, Controller-General of the Athenians.

DLXXIV. WHEN a Man of Letters was offered the whole of the *Mercure* at three sous a volume, he said: 'I will wait till it is marked down.'

DLXXV. MONSIEUR de . . . , a once passionate lover, was twitted by his friends on his premature old age, because he had lived for several years in continence. 'You are inapt,' he answered, 'I was very old a few years ago, but now I am very young.'

DLXXVI. MOST benefactors are like unskilful generals who take the city & leave the citadel intact.

DLXXVII. A WIT, who saw that he was being mischievously quizzed by a couple of wags, said: 'You are mistaken, gentlemen, I am neither a fool nor a dolt, but somewhat between the two.'

DLXXVIII. AN ugly woman who dresses up when she must sit in company with young and pretty ones, is doing, in her own way, what a man does who cannot abide to be beaten in argument: skilfully changing the point at issue. She tries to shift the question from *who is the fairest* to *who is the richest.*

DLXXIX. WHEN Monsieur D . . . repulsed the advances of a beautiful woman, her husband conceived as great a hatred for him as if he had accepted them. 'Good God, if he only knew how funny he was,' said Monsieur B . . . , and people laughed at this.

DLXXX. A MAN who had been notoriously blind to his wife's misconduct and had even many times connived at it for his own advantage, showed utter desolation when she died, and said to me quite seriously: 'I can use Louis the Sixteenth's words on the death of Marie-Thérèse: "This is the first time she has ever grieved me." '

DLXXXI. A BEAUTIFUL woman whose lover had a sullen & married air, once said to him: 'When

you are seen in Society with my husband, Monsieur, you are expected to be more genial than he is.'

DLXXXII. A DOCTOR used to say: 'Only heirs pay really well.'

DLXXXIII. THERE is such a thing as low gratitude.

DLXXXIV. IN cities the old are more corrupt than the young; rottenness follows maturity.

DLXXXV. THERE is no virtue poverty cannot spoil. It is not the cat's fault that she takes the servant's dinner.

DLXXXVI. MONSIEUR D . . . L . . . explained to Monsieur D . . . how he had been vilely treated in a certain matter, and asked him: 'What would you do in my place?' The other, who was an egoist because he hated mankind, and had become indifferent to injustice because he had suffered so much of it, answered him coldly: 'In your place, Monsieur, I would look after my stomach and keep my tongue red.'

DLXXXVII. A DOCTOR of the Sorbonne said in his rage against the *Système de la Nature:* 'It is an execrable, an abominable book; it *proves* atheism.'

DLXXXVIII. IT is with philosophy as with monasticism. Many take the vows in spite of themselves, & rage for the rest of their lives; some learn patience, and a few even grow happy and silent and do not try to proselytize; but those who are in despair at their own enlistment *seek to recruit novices*.

DLXXXIX. SOME people put their books into their library, but Monsieur . . . puts his library into his books.

DXC. A LITTLE girl said to Monsieur . . . , the author of a book on Italy: 'Monsieur, you have written a book about Italy?' 'Yes, Mademoiselle,' 'Have you been there?' 'Indeed I have.' 'Did you write your book after you went, or before you went?'

DXCI. MONSIEUR . . . , who was often asked to read his poems and very much disliked doing so, admitted that whenever he began his reading he used to think of a certain mountebank on the Pont Neuf. This fellow always said to his monkey as it began its tricks: 'We are not here to amuse ourselves, my dear Bertrand, we are here to please the honourable company.'

DXCII. THERE is a kind of melancholy which amounts to spiritual greatness.

DXCIII. A COUNTRY priest, in asking for the prayers of his congregation, said: 'Gentlemen, pray to God for the soul of the owner of the chateau, who has died of his wounds in Paris.' (He had been a libertine.)

DXCIV. THEY say that Monsieur . . . , as he adds to the number of vile services he does for a great lord, becomes progressively more attached to him, just as the ivy clings the closer by creeping.

DXCV. A VERY rich man said of the poor: 'It is no use not giving them anything, the extraordinary fellows always go on asking.' More than one Prince might say the same of his courtiers.

DXCVI. A PROVINCIAL worried his neighbour with questions at the King's Mass. 'Who is that lady?' 'The Queen.' 'And that?' 'Madame.' 'And that?' 'The Comtesse d'Artois.' 'And that?' 'The late queen,' answered the Versailles man irritably.

DXCVII. AT the time of the *Assemblée des Notables* (1787), when the question was raised of granting considerable powers to intendants in provincial assemblies, a certain influential personage showed himself favourable to the motion. A subtle friend of his was approached on the matter and promised to make him change his opinion. He succeeded, and

when he was asked how, he answered: 'He is absolutely infatuated on the subject of birth, so I did not insist upon the intendants' tyrannical abuse of their power, but told him that some exceedingly well-born gentlemen had to call them: *Monseigneur*. He saw the enormity of this, and it brought him round to your opinion.'

DXCVIII. DEFINITION of a despotic government: A state in which the superior is vile and the inferior is vilified.

DXCIX. MINISTERS have brought about the destruction of kingly authority, just as priests have undermined the authority of religion. God and the King have suffered from the stupidity of their valets.

DC. A MAN said innocently to one of his friends: 'We condemned three men to death this morning. Two of them certainly deserved it.'

End of Volume II.

NOTES.

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It was at first intended to leave *Maxims and Considerations of Chamfort* as a plain, unannotated text, so that it should conform to the intention of the series of which it makes a part; but it became apparent, during the course of preparation, that a minimum of notes ought to be given. These have only been added, however, in places where the unfamiliarity of a phrase might check the attention of the reader, or where a literal translation has been discarded in favour of a less faithful one.

XV. *Cherin's Office.* Bernard Cherin, the Genealogist Royal.

XLV. *at the beginning the sixteenth century.* Thus Chamfort.

XLVIII. *the Quinze-Vingts*, inmates of the Quinze-Vingts, an asylum in Paris for three hundred blind men.

CCLXIV. *an Eldorado*, literally *un Pérou.*

CCCXXXIV. *Monsieur de M. . . .* Mirabeau, according to Ad. van Bever, the editor of the latest French text, from which the present translation has been made.

CCCXLIV. *as Céladon as you see me now.* Céladon, a generic name in pastoral poetry for a rustic lover.

CDLXXX. See note on XV.

CDXCIII. *the rose*, literally *le chapeau de rosière.* The rosière is the rose-queen, or winner of the rose, as the best behaved girl in her village.

DLXVI. Literally: '*Je suis bien dégoûté des hommes.*' *disait M. de L . . .*—'*Vous n'êtes pas degoûté,*' *lui dit M. de N. . .*, *non pour lui nier ce qu'il disait, mais par misanthropie, pour lui dire: votre goût est bon.*

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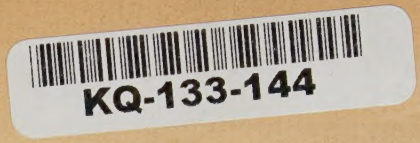
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